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OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL PICTURE--TITLE I.

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INFORMATION ABOUT ESEA READING PROJECTS FOR THE ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED WAS OBTAINED BY STRUCTURED TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS AND A SUPPLEMENTAL WRITTEN FORM FROM 632 SCHOOL SYSTEMS. FIELD VISITS WERE MADE TO 34 SELECTED SYSTEMS. THE MAJORITY OF THESE PROGRAMS WAS REMEDIAL IN NATURE (53.48 PERCENT). COMBINATION PROGRAMS (29.59 PERCENT) USUALLY INVOLVED TWO OR MORE PROJECTS ASSOCIATED WITH READING BUT OFTEN ADMINISTERED INDEPENDENTLY. FREQUENTLY, THEY CONTAINED A REMEDIAL COMPONENT SO THAT AT LEAST TWO-THIRDS OF THE PROGRAMS STUDIED WERE REMEDIAL IN PART OR ENTIRELY. DEVELOPMENTAL (12.82 PERCENT), ENRICHMENT (1.58 PERCENT), INSERVICE EDUCATION (1.27 PERCENT), AND SPECIAL PROJECTS (1.27 PERCENT) MADE UP THE REMAINING CATEGORIES. INFORMATION WAS ALSO GATHERED ON ADMINISTRATION, MONIES SPENT, STAFFING, CONSULTANT SERVICES, AND INNOVATIVE ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAMS. APPROXIMATELY THREE-QUARTERS OF THE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS SAID THAT OBTAINING QUALIFIED PERSONNEL AND TOO MANY CHILDREN NEEDING HELP WERE CRITICAL PROBLEMS. PRIORITY MUST BE GIVEN TO TWO RELATED STEPS -- (1) THE EXTENSION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PROGRAMS TO INCLUDE 3-, 4-, 5-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN, AND (2) IMPROVEMENTS IN READING INSTRUCTION IN THE PRIMARY GRADES. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE (BOSTON, APRIL 24-27, 1968). (RJ)

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OVERVIEW OF THE NATIONAL PICTURE: TITLE I

Since the dramatic legislation of 1965 which authorized unprecedented amounts of Federal funds for ESEA, Title I, hundreds of school systems have instituted special reading programs for the economically disadvantaged. Most of the schools are using these funds to improve the quality and quantity of reading instruction by adding qualified personnel and by providing in-service training.

Despite valiant efforts to upgrade the educational achievement of disadvantaged pupils, however, there is still

scant evidence that the problem is being resolved. In fact, pupils in central cities are reportedly falling farther below national averages. A state of crisis still exists.

The late President John F. Kennedy once stated: "When written in Chinese, the word 'crisis' is composed of two characters: one represents danger and one represents opportunity." I hope you will keep this statement in mind as we consider Title I reading projects, for a situation which is potentially dangerous also presents many opportunities. A brief report of the survey undertaken by members of the Department of Education at Case Western Reserve University will be found below.

Research Design

Information about six types of reading projects funded by ESEA during 1966-67 was obtained by structured telephone interviews from 632 school systems throughout continental United States, except Connecticut which asked to be omitted. Additional data were gained from a supplemental written form. Results were coded and compiled for computer analysis.

Field visits were made by the survey team to 34 systems chosen on the basis of size, geographical location, number of pupils receiving help in reading through Title I, amount of Title I money allocated to reading, type of program, and the

program's unique features. Descriptive data from the field visits were analyzed according to type of program, the project's special ingredients, and positive and negative influences upon the success of these projects. The latter were determined by previous research findings, conferences with three national consultants, and professional knowledge of the survey staff.

Findings

The great bulk of reading programs for the disadvantaged were remedial in nature (53.48%). These included clinics, remedial classes, and/or corrective classes for pupils whose reading retardation varied from severe to mild. Combination programs (29.59%) usually involved two or more projects associated with reading but often administered independently. Frequently, they contained a remedial component so that, in effect, at least two-thirds of the reading programs funded by Title I were remedial, in part or entirely. Developmental (12.82%), enrichment (1.58%), in-service education (1.27%), and special projects (1.27%) made up the remaining categories.

Certain patterns emerged in the operation of these projects. The three most common elements of remedial approaches, for example, were small groups of 10 or less (368 systems), meeting 4 or 5 times a week (301), for periods of 31 minutes or more (277).

Nearly two-thirds of Title I reading programs (416) were

planned for pupils in all grades, kindergarten through grade 12. About one-third were directed toward pupils at the elementary level (K-6), and less than five per cent were conducted for secondary students (grades 7-12), exclusively.

Of those school systems which could identify the specific amount reserved for reading, thirty (4.75%) invested $500,000 or more; 148 (23.42%) expended from $100,000 to $499,999; 203 (32.12%) allocated from $25,000 to $99,999; and 126 (19.94%) spent less than $25,000

Personnel changes for Title I reading projects were made in approximately 80% of the school systems. Generally speaking, professional staff was recruited wherever it could be found, both from within and outside the school district. Systems were about equally divided in their use of teacher-aides or para-professionals. More than half of the aides came from the school neighborhoods themselves.

Although most schools considered training important for those who work with disadvantaged children, 75 systems provided no in-service education of any kind. Those which did, offered meetings led by local specialists or university consultants on a limited, infrequent basis. Only 77 systems reported carefully planned in-service work of 15 hours or more throughout the school year.

When innovative aspects of programs were explored, local

directors reported in order of frequency: new materials (515), provision for individual or small group instruction (397), changes in instructional environment (343), and individual diagnostic work (273). Few gave any indication of developing new techniques or materials or of initiating creative projects. Stated as original ideas were: master teacher demonstrations (26), and after-school centers (6).

Any new undertaking, obviously, encounters a number of problems. In this respect, reading projects for disadvantaged youth were no exception. Approximately three-quarters of the survey participants said that obtaining qualified personnel was a critical problem, along with "too many children who needed help." Less serious obstacles were viewed as teacher training, personnel shortage for planning and supervising projects, and delays in obtaining facilities, materials, and equipment.

Interpretation of Findings

The preponderance of remedial programs perhaps can be attributed to an assumption that present school offerings will be satisfactory for the great majority of pupils, if past deprivation can be overcome. Nevertheless, some schools recognize that school curricula are ill-adapted to the maturation and previous life-experiences of from 1/3 to 1/2 of the student population. They realize that what is needed, therefore, is an educational revolution as fundamental as the social changes of the space age: child need-centered programs

supported by well-prepared personnel, reduction of class size, diagnostic teaching procedures, personalized instruction, and quantities of appropriate materials. Tomorrow's curriculum will depend increasingly upon independent learning abilities of students. Reading is the basic tool for such independence.

An encouraging trend noted during the study was the added emphasis being placed upon programs for young children. Educators appear more committed to a heavier investment in activities which predispose children to learning.

Admittedly, during the early months of Title I, many people were expected to undertake work with the disadvantaged with little or no additional training. Where training was offered, teachers desired help of a more practical nature and often expressed disappointment when meetings were devoted to a "sharing of ignorance." Lack of supervisory counsel handicapped some programs. By contrast, where there were enthusiastic, knowledgeable consultants to work closely with the school staff, in-service programs appeared effective.

Theoretically, every Title I proposal states plans for evaluating the progress of recipients of special services. Practically, however, evaluating the achievement of disadvantaged youth is difficult even under the best circumstances. Although local directors are focusing attention on project objectives, evaluation design, and data collection, assistance is needed in these areas.

Needed Changes

Because deprived children are often taught by deprived teachers (teachers who are ill-prepared for working with poverty-pocket children), quality preservice and in-service programs are essential now and in the future. Studies have shown repeatedly that variables of instruction time and the teachers are more influential than methods or materials in teaching children to read. The task is monumental, but we must recruit, train, support, and retain dedicated and competent personnel to teach disadvantaged boys and girls. Unless we can accomplish this goal, we will insure the inadequate reader continuity in his role of failure throughout his school years.

Lip-service to early intervention and prevention of school failures is not enough. Priority must be given to two directly related steps: 1) the downward extension of public school programs to include 3-, 4-, and 5-year-old children, and 2) instructional improvements in reading in the primary grades. To facilitate the latter, hundreds of additional reading consultants will be needed to work with teachers. Preparation of these consultants will require substantial grants for full-time study at universities which have designed special programs for them.

Hopefully, more resource people will be available to help in the construction, implementation, and evaluation of projects for needy children. The establishment of regional centers should be considered seriously. In addition to their leadership functions,

such centers would serve as vital forces to coordinate the efforts of project directors and to conduct research to eliminate and/or overcome the devastating effects of ghetto childhoods.

Based on the results of the Case Reserve Survey of Title I Reading Projects during 1966-67, we can say without reservation that we must move from where we are in our work with the economically disadvantaged to programs and practices which are dramatically better. Not only does society demand something dramatically better, but educators in general believe that there is more to a learning environment than the presence or absence of appropriate materials. Children learn in a variety of ways, and today's teachers are expected to assess the cognitive learning styles and affective relationships of their pupils in order to provide superior learning settings. Growth toward systematically personalizing instruction represents both an opportunity and a desired outcome in our continuing efforts with the nation's deprived youth.